

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A safety needle assembly comprising:
  - a hub having a proximal end and a distal end with a passageway extending therebetween;
  - a needle cannula having a proximal end portion, a distal end portion and a lumen extending therebetween, the needle cannula extending from the distal end of the hub;
  - an elongated shield pivotably movable between a first position exposing said needle cannula and a second position encompassing said needle cannula, said shield maintained in said first position through a latch mechanism extending between said shield and said hub;
  - a biasing element biasing the shield toward the second position; and
  - a release arrangement comprising a movable member extending from the hub and movable with respect to said hub, such that movement of said movable member causes engagement of said movable member with said latch mechanism, thereby causing release of said latch mechanism and causing said biasing element to bias said shield toward said second position,

wherein said moveable member of said release arrangement comprises a first finger tab including a camming surface, said camming surface adapted for engagement with said latch mechanism upon movement of said first finger tab so as to release said latch mechanism, thereby causing said biasing element to bias said shield toward said second position.
2. (Cancelled)
3. (Currently Amended) A safety needle assembly as in claim 2 1, wherein said latch mechanism comprises an elongate member extending from said hub and in frictional engagement with a recess or opening in said shield.

4. (Original) A safety needle assembly as in claim 3, wherein said elongate member includes a tab on an end surface thereof, said tab extending within and in frictional engagement with said recess or opening in said shield.

5. (Original) A safety needle assembly as in claim 4, wherein movement of said first finger tab causes said camming surface to cam said tab out of frictional engagement with said recess or opening in said shield.

6. (Currently Amended) A safety needle assembly as in claim 2 1, further comprising a second finger tab in opposing relation with said first finger tab, said first finger tab movable upon application of pressure between said second finger tab and said first finger tab.

7. (Original) A safety needle assembly as in claim 1, wherein said shield further includes structure for maintaining said shield in said second position.

8. (Original) A safety needle assembly as in claim 7, wherein said structure comprises a cannula lock extending from within a passageway of said shield for engagement with said needle cannula.

9. (Original) A safety needle assembly as in claim 1, further comprising a pair of flexible wings extending from opposing lateral sides of said hub.

10. (Original) A safety needle assembly as in claim 1, wherein said hub further comprises structure for attachment to a medical device.

11. (Original) A safety needle assembly as in claim 1, wherein said biasing element comprises a leaf spring.

12. (Original) A safety needle assembly as in claim 1, wherein said hub, said biasing element and said shield are integrally formed with said biasing element extending between the distal end of said hub housing and a proximal end of said shield.

13. (Original) A safety needle assembly as in claim 1, further comprising a removable packaging cover covering said distal end of said needle cannula.

14. (Original) A safety needle assembly as in claim 1, wherein said packaging cover assists in maintaining said shield in said first position.

15. to 21 (Cancelled)

22. (Currently Amended) ~~The method of claim 21,~~ A method for passively activating a safety needle assembly comprising:

providing a safety needle system comprising a hub including a needle cannula extending from a distal end of said hub toward a distal puncture tip and a pivotable shield adjacent said hub, said safety needle system further including a biasing element for pivotably biasing said shield toward a shielding position encompassing said distal puncture tip of said needle cannula and a latch mechanism between said hub and said shield for maintaining said shield in a biased state adjacent said hub, said latch mechanism being releasable through engagement with a release mechanism to release said shield from said biased state;

inserting said safety needle system into a patient; and

grasping said release mechanism, thereby causing release of said latch mechanism and releasing said shield from said biased state and causing said shield to pivot toward said shielding position

wherein the latch mechanism comprises an elongate member extending from said hub and in frictional engagement with a recess or opening in said shield,

wherein said elongate member includes a tab on an end surface thereof, said tab extending within and in frictional engagement with said recess or opening in said shield, and

wherein said release mechanism comprises a finger tab including a camming surface, and wherein said grasping step causes movement of said first finger tab which causes said camming surface to cam said tab out of frictional engagement with said recess or opening in said shield.

23. (Original) The method of claim 22, wherein said release mechanism comprises a second finger tab opposing said first finger tab, and wherein said grasping step comprises grasping said first and second finger tabs, thereby causing movement of said first finger tab with respect to said second finger tab which causes said camming surface to cam said tab out of frictional engagement with said recess or opening in said shield.

24. (Cancelled)